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California Transportation Commission approves a \$239 million allocation for County transportation projects

SACRAMENTO, CA - San Bernardino County transportation officials were pleased to receive word that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) approved the allocation of \$239 million in Prop 1B Transportation Corridor Improvement Fund (TCIF) for projects within the county. The announcement was made at the CTC hearing in Sacramento on April 10.

The Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality, and Port Security Bond Act of 2006 was approved by California voters as Proposition 1B on November 7, 2006. The Bond Act provides that funds will be transferred to the TCIF for allocation by the CTC for infrastructure improvements along corridors that have a high volume of freight movement.

The funding approval of \$239 million for San Bernardino County represents several transportation projects, including: improvements at the Devore Interchange where the I-15/I-215 meet; reconstructing three freeway interchanges along the I-10 Corridor (at Citrus and Cherry Avenues in Fontana, and at Riverside Avenue in Rialto); and seven railroad grade separations (overpass or underpass where railroad tracks intersect with roadways). The grade separations are located at Glen Helen Parkway and at Palm Avenue in San Bernardino, Lenwood Road in Barstow, Valley Boulevard in Colton, and North Milliken, South Milliken, and Vineyard Avenues in Ontario.

In January 2008, San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) submitted a request to the CTC to seek funding for \$398 million in San Bernardino County transportation projects. The decision on which transportation projects to nominate for TCIF Prop 1B funds was made by a unanimous vote of the SANBAG board, which includes elected officials from 24 cities in the county, along with all five members of the County Board of Supervisors. The request was subsequently included in a collaborative submittal made by the Southern

California Consensus Group, which is comprised of transportation agencies from five counties, including San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura Counties, along with the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. The Consensus Group's total request was for \$1.7 billion in transportation projects located throughout Southern California.

"We are pleased with the amount of funding that was approved for San Bernardino County," stated SANBAG President Lawrence Dale. "In a climate of financial uncertainties at the State level, we were glad to see that Prop 1B funds will be directed to transportation projects as the voters intended. This now paves the way for our county to proceed with freeway and road improvement projects needed in the coming years."

One San Bernardino County grade separation project proposed for South Archibald Avenue in Ontario did not receive funding, nor did the Tier II proposal for \$150 million to help fund the first phase of the High Desert Corridor Project. The nominations from Southern California included a list of Tier II projects, in the event that additional funds became available. Although no Tier II projects were funded, they remain on a list of important projects which are needed to improve goods movement through the region.

"Commuter congestion exacerbated by freight movement through the High Desert will receive much-needed relief," said County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt. "The I-15/I-215 Devore Interchange keeps High Desert commuters away from their families for far too long every workday. The entire interchange will be reconfigured to allow freight trucks to move through more quickly and passenger vehicles will not have the long waits coming through the Cajon Pass." CTC allocated \$118 million in TCIF funding, or nearly half of the estimated cost of the Devore Interchange project.

Dale, who is also the Mayor of Barstow, was pleased to hear seven grade separations were approved. "As a retired railroad man, I am well aware that the number and length of freight trains passing through our county has increased dramatically in recent years," he said. "One railroad grade separation will be constructed on Lenwood Road in Barstow. TCIF funds will contribute \$6.7 million toward the project cost." Dale and Mitzelfelt have been working together to assure funding for this important project serving Barstow area residents.

Improving truck and freight movement along the I-10 Corridor is welcomed news to Fontana Mayor Mark Nuaimi. "The CTC approved \$68.5 million in TCIF funding towards the overall project," said Nuaimi. "The project calls for reconstructing three inadequate 50-year old interchanges on Interstate 10, at Cherry and Citrus Avenues in Fontana, and at Riverside Avenue in Rialto. Anyone who travels that stretch of the I-10 can see the freight trucks backing up along the off ramps as they try to get to trucking centers along the freeway."

Ontario officials were glad to hear that three railroad grade separations were approved to receive funding in their city. "Traffic congestion at railroad crossings has become a major problem in Ontario," commented Ontario Mayor Paul Leon. "The CTC approved TCIF funding in the amounts of \$6.9 million toward the Vineyard Grade Separation, \$6.5 million toward the North Milliken Avenue Grade Separation, and \$8 million toward the South

Milliken Grade Separation. This funding is a great boost toward the overwhelming funding needed to move freight trains through our region.”

“The prospect of receiving a \$239 million infusion of Prop1B transportation funding into San Bernardino County is great news for our residents and businesses,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane, who serves as Second District Supervisor. “This funding will allow us to move forward with major transportation projects that will provide significant congestion relief for commuters, communities, and the freight movement businesses that are key to our county’s economy.”

The news about funding for a railroad grade separation in Colton reached Colton Mayor Kelly Chastain. “It is exciting to hear we will receive \$7.6 million toward constructing the railroad grade separation on Valley Boulevard,” commented Chastain. “It has become a major problem as traffic backs up waiting for more than 100 freight trains per day to pass through our city. Colton residents will be happy to hear this.”

Likewise, Fifth District County Supervisor Josie Gonzales was pleased about the funding approved in her district. “In addition to the Valley Boulevard project, I am pleased that the Palm Avenue Grade Separation should receive \$9.4 million for construction. The Glen Helen Parkway Grade Separation project, which is partially in my district and partially in Second District Supervisor Paul Biane's district, was allocated \$7.2 million. We can all feel very good about these funds being allocated for San Bernardino County.”

The Colton Crossing, south of the I-10 Freeway where north-south railroad tracks intersect with east-west tracks, is still under consideration by the CTC for a TCIF allocation; however, any action on the project has been deferred until September, 2008.

SANBAG has adopted a multi-faceted approach to moving freight through Southern California and San Bernardino County – an approach that reflects current and future freight volumes and uses all modes of transportation. Funds will support rail and truck improvements, as well as mitigate the impact of freight movement on communities.

After months of preparing nominations to receive the TCIF Prop 1B funding, transportation agencies throughout Southern California can now look forward to proceeding with transportation improvement projects.

The allocations are still subject to actions by the Legislature to appropriate the funds and the State’s ability to sell bonds. The projects are all at varying levels of progress in the planning and development stages. “With funding now designated, the communities can rest assured, knowing there is relief in sight,” concluded SANBAG President Lawrence Dale.

For more information about SANBAG transportation projects, go to: www.sanbag.ca.gov

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